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Review of *Text, time, and context*

posted March 2nd, 2012

Text, time, and context: Selected papers of Carlota S. Smith. Ed. by **Richard P. Meier**, **Helen Aristar-Dry**, and **Emilie Destruel**. Dordrecht: Springer, 2010. Pp. lxiv, 404. ISBN [9789048126163](#). \$189 (Hb).

Reviewed by [Muhammad Aurang Zeb Mughal](#), *University of Durham*

Dallas TACA (The Arts and Community Alliance) Centennial Professor in the Humanities, Professor Carla S. Smith, died from cancer in 2007 at the age of seventy-three. She taught at the University of Texas at Austin for about thirty-eight years and has been well known as a pioneer scholar in generative linguistics. This book collects her papers, which she herself selected along with some of her colleagues, with a focus on temporal expression in language, starting with her earlier works from the 1970s onward, though her first publication appeared in 1961.

In the beginning of the book, an introduction of, an interview with, and a list of publications by Smith are helpful, especially for new readers of her work. The book is then divided into five sections. Each section includes an introduction by either one of the editors or an established linguist. Two papers included in this book are coauthored, one with Jeanne T. Whitaker and one with Mary S. Erbaugh. The first section focuses on aspect and includes three of Smith's papers on a speaker-based approach to aspect, aspectual categories in Navajo, and a dialogue over activities as states versus events. Smith's major focus in these papers is on situational choices by speakers.

The second section addresses tense, an explicit temporal category and expression in language. This section includes four papers on the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of tense, dealing with the interpretation of temporal expressions focusing on the English futurate construction, and with tense and context in French. The third section addresses acquisition of tense and includes two papers deal with the first language acquisition and learning of temporalities through grammar by children.

The fourth section deals with discourse structure or discourse modes. The papers within any section of this book are collected according to theme and not according to chronology of their publication. Although this might be confusing since a scholar passes through personal

and intellectual transformations over time, it is helpful for understanding the arguments of a single scholar on particular issue. All four papers in this section provide a bridge between Smith's earlier works on transformational syntax and later analysis on aspect, tense, and discourse structure and modes. The final section includes two essays on context and interpretation, in which Smith discusses drawing inferences and issues of subjectivity.

This book would be useful in semantics and linguistics while studying the temporal expressions in language and analyzing it in a cultural context. Since different papers not only deal with one language but also draw on different languages, such as English, French, Navajo, Mandarin, and Russian, the book will be a useful reader in linguistic anthropology and cross-cultural studies of language. There are still many issues that can be drawn from Smith's work, for someone researching temporality in language. For instance, this book includes papers on first-language acquisition in children, which is indeed Smith's expertise; however, analyzing gender disparities or intercultural temporal expressions of language can also be drawn from her work.

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